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## PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

### INTRODUCTION

The two essential elements of the military concept are

- a mining operation sufficient to seal off the sea approaches to North Vietnam and thus NVN's supply of waterborne imports,
- collateral bombing designed to destroy or damage supplies, industrial capacity, and critical parts of the transportation system, thereby intensifying the economic strains brought about by the mining.

A detailed assessment of this concept involves analyzing

- their capabilities to counter the effects of the mining and bombing,
- required actions on our part -- e.g. reseeding the minefields, destroying lighters, cutting rail lines and highways -- to prevent their countermeasures from being successful.

A rough preliminary assessment is as follows:\*

#### NVN Countermeasures and Our Responses

General. North Vietnam has stockpiles of food, industrial supplies, and petroleum sufficient to last several months. Upwards of 30-40% of their petroleum stocks, 50,000 tons or so of imported supplies, and perhaps 1000 trucks could be vulnerable to our initial attacks. Nevertheless, remaining stocks are largely dispersed and difficult to destroy by bombing. These stocks can sustain NVN for a few months.

Countering the Mining. North Vietnam would attempt to counter the effects of the mining in three ways:

- sweeping or otherwise breaching the minefields,
- rerouting imports through rail and highway approaches from China,
- airlift from or through China. *where?*

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\* The concept assumes that we surprise North Vietnam and that bad weather will not force major changes in the military plan. Later we will analyze what we do if these assumptions prove false.



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North Vietnam, even with Chinese or Russian help probably cannot sweep the minefields in a way which allows large ships to continue to dock. She can attempt to unload ships beyond the minefields into barges and other small craft and sweep the fields well enough to allow cargo to move ashore this way.

If they try this, we can easily lay more mines. We can also attack and attempt to destroy the barges and lighters with naval gunfire and tactical aircraft.

It is more likely that North Vietnam will seek to have imports rerouted through China. 172?

-- Ships with goods bound for North Vietnam could unload in Chan-chiang, 560 miles from Hanoi by direct rail line, or Canton, which is much further by rail from Hanoi; (see attached map)

-- China herself could supply petroleum, food and some other supplies to North Vietnam by rail or highway.

The general strain on Chinese supplies and transportation capability would not be great because North Vietnam's requirements [for 16 million people] are relatively small. There will be local strains, however, and it will take time (we are analyzing how long) to assemble rail cars and divert supplies from their normal routes.

Our response to a major overland operation to supply North Vietnam could be to attack repeatedly the rail lines, marshalling yards, sidings, bridges and highways from China in an attempt to stop the supply flow. We could also bomb supply concentrations.

We should be more effective in this than we were when bombing North Vietnam before; we can concentrate our efforts instead of bombing targets all over North Vietnam. We still will not have complete success, however. Weather, darkness and the difficulty of policing the long border with China will provide opportunities for some supplies to get through.



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There may be an airlift. However, only a fraction of the import requirements -- high value spare parts, medical supplies, etc -- could be moved by air. The problems posed for us by an airlift would be more symbolic than real.

Countering the Bombing. The North Vietnamese may try to restore the airfields we destroy, but they probably will not try to rebuild the other facilities. They will attempt to do without.





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CONCEPTUAL PLAN OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

1. Concept. U. S. military forces will conduct operations against North Vietnam with forces now available in order to demonstrate U. S. resolve to achieve basic U. S. objectives in Southeast Asia. Such operations would be designed to attain maximum political, military, and psychological shock, while reducing North Vietnam's over-all economic capacity and war-making capacity to the extent feasible. The operation would commence with a near-simultaneous and integrated attack against the enemy air order-of-battle and air defenses, mining of six deep-water ports, interdiction of the North-east Rail Line, and attacks against selected, critical targets. The over-all concept is based on the partial isolation and quarantine of NVN by aerial mining augmented by initial rail interdictions, and the maximum practical damage to key targets. It is characterized by boldness of action and intensity of effort and will be conducted in a period of four strike days, not necessarily consecutive if adverse weather conditions prevail. Upon completion it should represent an accomplished fact of measurable proportions.

"Awe"

(five) bands  
Hanoi,  
Haiphong?  
Port Targets?remain  
threat?  
other  
what happens?2. Assumptions.

a. The impending onset of the northeast monsoon brings prevailing poor weather to NVN. Climatological records indicate that weather conditions may prevent effective air operations approximately 50% of the time in November, with the situation becoming progressively worse until April 1, 1970. The assumption is made that sufficient good weather will occur to permit application of tactical air power against NVN targets for the minimum time required to execute the plan successfully but flexibility in selecting D-Day will be necessary. Once initiated, attacks can be completed in a minimum of four days, extended to approximately seven if required by weather.

b. Current constraints will, in general, be altered or relaxed to permit application of force where, when, and to the extent required to achieve the stated objectives. Care will be taken in the exercise of these broadened authorities to minimize civilian casualties and damage to third-country shipping and to avoid border violations.





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c. Domestic and international pressures running counter to U.S. offensive military operations against NVN can be offset through governmental initiatives or tacitly ignored. The U.S. government's demonstration of indifference to such pressures might well constitute the strongest signal to Hanoi.

so - some  
protest is  
useful

d. Communist-bloc countries currently supporting NVN's war-making efforts with arms and war support materiel will continue to accommodate to any U.S. offensive initiatives by rerouting their support via alternate channels, but these options will pose problems of significant proportions.

3. Phasing. Planned operations divide themselves logically into two phases, with follow-on phases as necessary. Included in Phase I are those tasks which will close NVN ports, interdict the Northeast Rail Line, disrupt or destroy her air order-of-battle, and destroy vulnerable and critical segments of the North Vietnamese economy. These tasks emphasize the isolation of NVN and the destruction of key targets wherever located, thereby confronting Hanoi with economic problems involving costly and time-consuming restoration or counter-measures. Phase I is characterized as a short strategic campaign against NVN as a society, rather than as a resumption of old bombing patterns with self-limiting attacks against widely dispersed and transient military supply lines to South Vietnam. Phase II would be subject to continuing review as the campaign progresses and as we measure North Vietnamese attitudes toward negotiation.

rec?

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4. Conduct of Operations.

a. The concept for Phase I is based on the fact that North Vietnam now is completely reliant upon outside sources to sustain her civilian economy and ability to conduct effective combat operations in Southeast Asia. Although current stocks of war materiel available in NVN, Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam will permit continuation of offensive military operations for at least several months without additional imports, her over-all national requirements will necessitate shifting of priorities in order to accommodate to growing shortages as outside sources are impeded. However, even if sea imports are fully denied, combat operations could be sustained in South Vietnam at a low rate for an indefinite period of time. Denial of imports by sea and rail, coupled with the destruction of maximum practicable key targets



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and resources, is designed to impact heavily on NVN by achieving a significant effect on her economy and desire to continue the war. These operations will reduce imports into North Vietnam to a critical point and destroy supplies that are exposed to effective attack. It envisions the maximum concentration of effort for (shock) effect. The credibility of this signal is enhanced by its identification with a concept which exploits the enemy's dependence upon imports. It outlines a series of inter-related military actions against NVN which, for the most part, lend themselves to implementation separately, in combinations, or as an integrated package.

b. The concept in Phase I provides for the integrated and near-simultaneous execution of the following tasks:

- (1) Major air strikes against NVN's counter-air capability in order to protect the strike forces.
  - (2) Aerial mining of North Vietnam deep-water ports and interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line.
  - (3) The systematic destruction of supplies and selected logistic facilities employing a concentration of air and naval forces in a short period of time.
  - (4) Subsequent enforcement of the quarantine by periodic reseedling of the minefields and continuing interdiction of NVN lighters and waterborne logistics craft.
- c. Subsequently, within available resources, and as required, Phase II operations will be commenced with increased intensity as follows:
- (1) The destruction of selected logistics target systems and industrial targets in order of military importance, employing both tactical air and B-52 as appropriate, together with naval gunfire attacks on coastal watercraft and shore logistics installations.
  - (2) Intensified interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line from Hanoi to Communist China.
  - (3) Breaching of the levee system in the Red River

Delta





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d. Operations are sensitive to several factors which dictate the need for flexibility in execution:

(1) Weather. During the ensuing six months, weather will be the most critical factor. Bad weather can be expected to inhibit attacks in the Hanoi-Haiphong areas for days at a time, making it difficult to predict the achievement of given objectives within a fixed number of days. Maximum flexibility should be considered in the selection of the day for the initial attacks. The planned duration of any action should permit continuous operations until at least a given minimum effect has been attained. In the event that weather permits achievement of the desired effect in less than the planned time, the action could be terminated early or additional attacks undertaken for increased effect.

(2) Surprise. Surprise in the initial attacks will enhance optimum results, particularly in the initial strikes on the enemy's air defenses. Early success in this task will generate a greater shock effect, free aircraft for other tasks at an earlier time, and broaden U.S. options for subsequent action. Uncertainties surrounding the possible impact of the modified Fan Song radar or modifications to the SA-2 missile must be accepted as calculated risks.

(3) Concentration of Effort. This concept emphasizes concentration of effort. Concentrated attacks against target areas or target systems have the advantages of greater shock value, greater long-term damage to the enemy, and require less assets to protect strike forces.

(4) Enemy Defenses. Since the cessation of bombing operations north of the 19th parallel on 31 March 1968, enemy defenses have been increased to formidable proportions. Any attack against well-defended targets will require large numbers of suppressive-fire aircraft. The disadvantage in conducting attacks over relatively short periods of time is that in addition to the strike aircraft, aircraft are required for MIG protection, air defense suppression, and electronic countermeasures. In the initial phases, until these threats can be appreciably diminished, losses to friendly aircraft approximating three per cent can be anticipated.





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5. Tasks. The following tasks will be undertaken:

PHASE I

a. Conduct Major Air Strikes Against NVN Counter-Air Capability. Air strikes will be directed at H-Hour against active NVN airfields, aircraft, and other air defenses in order to protect strike forces and run down the enemy MIG inventory. Simultaneously, those SAM sites posing the greatest threat to strike forces will also be struck. The counterair effort and strikes against SAM sites will be continued against other key target systems, and will terminate upon completion of Phase I. Reduction of NVN's air defense will expose vital targets to concentrated air attacks and permit U. S. air and naval forces to operate against NVN with fewer losses. This action can be expected to possess shock value beyond that which could be attributed directly to loss of NVN aircraft, because degradation of the enemy's air defenses broadens the scope of military options open to the U. S. for follow-on actions.

b. Mine NVN Ports. Employing aerial delivery, mines will be seeded in the approaches to six NVN deep-water ports. Once seeded, these minefields would be fuzed to activate approximately 72 hours later. Delayed activation will permit third-country shipping to exit the ports safely. Diplomatic message will be dispatched to all noncombatant governments engaged in maritime trade with NVN to advise them of the hazards to ships remaining in port or attempting to enter port. If NVN attempts to accommodate to this quarantine by over-the-beach off-loading or lightering of cargo, the initial mining effort will be expanded to seed alternate off-loading areas and shallow-water ports. Lighters will be interdicted by a combination of naval gunfire and armed aerial reconnaissance. Minefields will be reseeded as required to maintain their effectiveness. These actions will have the combined effects of closing the ports to ships importing arms and war-supporting materiel to NVN and disrupting the country's economy and foreign trade reserves. Faced with the prospect of having to prosecute the war without the substantial quantities of outside help upon which his very existence depends, the enemy would be forced to reassess his capabilities with a view toward adapting alternatives. Additional shock effect could accrue through the enemy's recognition of our willingness to confront third countries.



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c. Interdiction of the Northeast Rail Line and Air Strikes Against Other Key Targets. To complement the mining and closure of the seaports and further impede the import of war-supporting materiel into NVN, the Northeast Rail Line between Hanoi and Dong Dang in Communist China will be severed by air strikes. To the maximum extent practicable, rail and highway traffic will be disrupted at strategic locations, and any large concentrations of rolling stock and supplies which develop as a result will be attacked and destroyed. Following hard upon closure of his ports, disruption of this vital artery will severely reduce NVN's imports and materially impair his capability to support both his economy and aggressive military operations in Southeast Asia. It will cause the enemy to face the prospect of pursuing his aggressive aims without adequate outside support to sustain him. Major air and naval gunfire attacks will be launched against additional target complexes as strike resources permit. Such targets will be of high economic value, the destruction of which will bite deeply into the available cushion of supplies and resources.

PHASE II

a. Isolation of NVN. Actions initiated in Phase I will be continued as necessary to isolate NVN from outside resources. Particular emphasis will be given to intensified interdiction efforts against NVN.

b. Air Strikes Against NVN. Major air strikes will be launched against critical target complexes in NVN. Among such targets are thermal power plants, industries, and large concentrations of stored vehicles, and rolling stock. A surprise attack against these targets will exploit vulnerabilities which can be expected to exist in several pertinent target categories only at the beginning of hostilities. Strikes will be concentrated against these targets to the maximum extent required to ensure their destruction. Fixed targets will be attacked in a systematic program to reduce depot stocks, port facilities, transportation, and distribution systems. Targets will be struck in a pattern such that the strike effort will be concentrated against the highest priority targets until their destruction is assured before the effort is shifted elsewhere. These actions can have a profound shock effect upon all segments of North Vietnam and the effect can be heightened through careful selection of targets.





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c. Breaching of the Levee System in the Red River Delta.

6. Target Selection.

a. Careful study of vulnerability factors, sensitivity to critical resupply problems, duration of operations, and availability of strike aircraft will determine final target selection. A number of critical facilities have been identified which meet one or more of the following criteria, and will be examined for inclusion in either a Phase I or Phase II target list:

- Achieve a high degree of damage or disruption to an important military or economic function.

- Require costly and time-consuming restore or countermeasures.

- Have strong psychological impact upon Hanoi's leadership.

b. Possible targets.

- Five complexes in the Haiphong port area, the destruction of which would eliminate a significant fraction of the 50,000 tons of supplies stored there and would cause widespread and severe disruption of the established distribution systems.

- Six electric power stations, the destruction of which would cripple most of NVN's modern industry and require one to two years for restoration with external support and assistance.

- Four jet airfields, on which are deployed all but one of the 119 NVN combat aircraft in country.

- One cement plant which currently provides most of the NVN domestic requirements of about 400,000 tons of cement annually and would require more than a year to repair.





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- One coal preparation plant which is the basis for Hanoi's effort to revive its hard currency export trade.

- One machine tool and engineering plant which is a significant factor in maintaining the NVN transportation system and producing a large share of the country's mechanical equipment.

- Five storage facilities which house some 50,000 tons of high-value supplies, up to 37,000 tons of petroleum (40% of the estimated NVN stockpile), and about 1,000 trucks (10% of the estimated NVN inventory).

- Three key bridges which maintain the flow of imports to Hanoi from Haiphong or China and which, if interdicted simultaneously with the mining of Haiphong, would be highly significant.

- Two major rail yards which not only contain large quantities of materials but also account for the bulk of the NVN capacity to repair rolling stock.

- The levee system in the Red River Delta which, if successfully attacked during the high water period of July-August, could destroy as much as 25% of the annual rice crop of 100,000 tons, temporarily halt most of the military and economic activity in the Hanoi area, and divert significant manpower to repair flood damage. ? New?

It would be neither feasible nor desirable to include all of these targets in one short air and naval bombardment. On the other hand, it is essential to include a substantial number of these whole target groupings in the first phase to complement the sea quarantine and to achieve the maximum over-all military, economic, and psychological impact on the DRV. Subsequent phases, if necessary, would not only deal with the NVN reactions to counter or moderate the effects of the first phase, but would include the remaining target groupings for greater effect.

done? 7. Reaction Time. In order to complete the necessary preparation actions and reposition forces required to implement this concept plan fully, a minimum of 86 hours prior notice is required. Without the mining option, a minimum of 72 hours' notice will be required.

ASSESSMENT OF NORTH VIETNAM'S ACTIONS  
AND U.S. COUNTER-COURSES

Summary.

CIA asked? or not? SNIE? IOR?

We must accept from the outset that Hanoi will be an extremely hard nut to crack, and that the North Vietnamese leaders may well conclude that having held out this far, they can do so sufficiently longer to leave us no choice but to back off. Their prestige is committed to victory, and their entire system may be jeopardized without it. They will thus make a very careful calculus of the odds for and against their being able to achieve their goals. Key factors are (1) their estimate of whether our action represents a last, desperate move which they can resist or the beginning of a serious program that will continue regardless of political consequences, in which they must at least consider the latter; (2) their estimate of their ability to continue to receive sufficient vitally-needed economic assistance from outside sources, principally China and the USSR, to allow the already-strained economy to hold together; and (3) their estimate of whether political conditions in the North can be kept stable. Hanoi faces a real dilemma in weighing these factors against its objectives.

Assuming that the scope of our actions does not suggest to Hanoi that we are attempting to destroy her as a functioning Communist state, we believe that she will respond more in a psychological than a military sense, although a sharp step-up in supporting military activity can be expected. Hanoi will want to generate the maximum amount of pressure possible against the Administration through criticism on the part of the U.S. public and world opinion in general, and to this end will mobilize its political and military resources to suggest that a peaceful solution had been rendered far more difficult, if not impossible, that U.S. combat losses can be expected to rise, and that the war will continue at a higher level. Hanoi probably will break off the Paris talks. It will attempt to use its diplomatic and political resources to mobilize anti-Administration campaigns in politically sensitive countries and within the U.S. itself. It may use new weapons and techniques in Vietnam in order to convey the impression of an escalation of its own. It will step up the pace of operations in South Vietnam, and possibly across the DMZ, and may call for foreign "volunteers". It will rely on South China ports and Chinese rail and road communications to bring supplies into North Vietnam. It will hope that a combination of crisis atmosphere, increased American bloodshed, and an apparent ability on Hanoi's part to keep going will force the Administration to back down and accept a settlement on Hanoi's terms.

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Conceivably, it will call for a stand-down cease-fire in South Vietnam to cause us to stop our operations. Excluding the factor of American public opinion, this situation should be bearable. Hanoi will still want a political settlement, and for this purpose probably will leave the door open for resumption of the Paris talks. Public opinion outside the U.S. has not proven to be a very effective tool, and should remain insignificant in this instance. Heightened military activity brings with it the threat of heavy casualties, which Hanoi has already sought to avoid, and will impose even greater strain on the North than our actions alone would bring. Calling for "volunteers" would tend to internationalize the war, which Hanoi does not want, and would inject new external influences into its policy deliberations, a situation which NVN wishes to avoid. Hanoi has kept the UN out of the situation, and will probably continue to do so. A slackening of Hanoi's military response in a relatively short time can be expected; while the pressures on Hanoi due to our quarantine will continue. If it calls for a cease-fire, this could be taken as a sign of weakness and we should press for more concessions before accepting.

A continuation of our existing policies toward the Vietnam war thus is indicated, along with an intensified public information campaign to put our actions into perspective, and the adoption of whatever military steps are necessary to meet Hanoi's stepped-up military activities so long as these military activities persist.

*no withdrawal  
of US forces?*

In effect, our main problem will not be the specifics of what Hanoi does against us but whether or not the North Vietnamese leaders will move toward a compromise within an acceptable time frame. If they do eventually decide to move toward compromise, the signs may be difficult to read in view of Hanoi's need to preserve as much of its prestige as possible. Concrete proposals will not be immediately offered by Hanoi, and should probably be avoided by us in order to leave the Communists a line of retreat. Without it they may well conclude that they have no other option but to fight to the death. We should take every opportunity to make it clear to Hanoi's leaders that we are willing to make it easy for them to change their previous policies.

If and when Hanoi does decide to move toward accepting a genuine compromise settlement of the war, we doubt that it will be deterred by Chinese Communist disapproval of this course.

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POSSIBLE NORTH VIETNAMESE ACTIONS  
AND  
US RESPONSES

<u>NVN</u>	<u>US</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
1. <u>In the South</u>		
Step up attacks on urban areas, particularly Saigon, Hue and Danang	Counter with appropriate military operations, publicize violations of 1968 "understandings"	Attacks will probably taper off in fairly brief period due to increased Communist vulnerabilities and run-down in supplies
Attack in strength across the DMZ	Same as above	Same as above
Launch a general "high point" offensive in wide areas of the South	Same as above	Same as above
Launch air attacks into the South against military and civilian targets	Counter with appropriate military operations	Unlikely to be very effective
Presume large-scale infiltration	Step up interdiction efforts	
2. <u>In the North</u>		
Step up conscription		Manpower shortage may limit this effort, which will also impose further strains on the economy and social structure

Declassified

E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

By THM NARA, Date 11/14/05

NVN

Call for Soviet, Chinese, or other "volunteers", to include manned aircraft and engineer, support, and AAA units (mostly from China)

Shift DRV aircraft to Chinese airfields in Yunnan and Kwangsi

Shift LOC's to posts in South China

Call for Chinese and Soviet cooperation in arranging airlift across China of critical supplies

3. Elsewhere

Step up military pressures in Laos

Rely more heavily on Cambodian bases for attacks on US and ARVN centers in the South

US

Consider economic and political sanctions against countries sending "volunteers". Continue with operations despite presence of foreign forces or pilots in NVN

Continue periodic strikes of road and rail lines in NVN linking NVN with China

Continue periodic strikes of NVN airfields

Continue present policies of aiding RLG, implement military and diplomatic contingency plans

Threaten Sihanouk with Cambodia becoming a battleground

REMARKS

May be considered more of symbolic value than of military value, although Chinese units of the type previously in NVN may help to ease manpower strains

Chinese will probably not authorize direct attacks on US aircraft from Chinese airfields

Military and diplomatic contingency planning currently under way

Declassified

E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

By THM NARA, Date 11/6/05

NVN

US

REMARKS

4. Political

Call on Soviet and Chinese  
for political support in UNGA  
and in other forums

Organize counter-pressures  
diplomatically and through  
information campaign

Surface, together with China,  
presence of Peking's  
"volunteers", thus suggesting  
a new Korean-type war

Recall long-standing history  
of Chinese presence in NVN

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E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

By *thm* NARA, Date *11/14/05*



Discussion.A. North Vietnam

We must accept from the outset that Hanoi will be an extremely tough nut to crack. Having held out for almost five years under heavy U. S. pressure and having ordered great sacrifices on the part of the people, the North Vietnamese leaders will be highly reluctant to yield now. In view of the uncompromising stand which they have publicly taken, they will inevitably suffer a loss of prestige before their people and in the eyes of the rest of the Communist world if they start to back down, and the very future of their grasp over the people and the Lao Dong Party may be involved. If they do decide to move toward a compromise, it may be later rather than sooner, after they have had a chance to assess the reaction in North Vietnam and in the U. S. and to calculate the odds for and against their being able to achieve their goals without a breakdown of the economy and the North Vietnamese political system.

Hanoi accordingly can be expected to strive to convey the impression that it is fully capable of withstanding the full weight of our attacks, that it has powerful friends that will be able to help sustain it, that the war will continue indefinitely but at a higher level and with increased American casualties, and that the U. S. action has in fact brought the threat of a wider conflict. All this would be directed principally at American public opinion and secondarily at world opinion, in hopes that the combination of criticism, tension, and increased bloodshed would in a fairly short period of time work upon the Administration to force it to back down and accelerate the U. S. disengagement from Vietnam.

Nevertheless, behind Hanoi's facade of uncompromising bellicosity, the North Vietnamese leaders will be facing real dilemmas which will significantly affect their judgment of North Vietnam's ability to hold out. These include:

Hanoi's Estimate of U. S. Intentions. Although Hanoi's leaders will want to act on the assumption that our attacks represent an act of desperation and that we will be compelled by circumstances to break off fairly soon (an assumption which Peking, at least, will encourage them to make), they will probably be greatly disturbed by the implications inherent in the nature of our attack. Our willingness to reverse entirely the emphasis of the previous year on seeking a political solution to the war and to strike heavily at targets previously left untouched could be read as

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a U. S. decision to carry on to the end regardless of political consequences. For Hanoi, such a decision could result in the wholesale destruction of the North Vietnamese political system and economic structure -- a situation which Hanoi's leaders have never before faced. They are already quite concerned about the deterioration of political standards in the North, and are attempting to impose a new set of rigid political controls. These could hardly be maintained under stress of sustained U. S. operations at the new levels. 1946-54?

Hanoi's Ability to Continue to Receive Outside Economic Aid.

Even under present conditions Hanoi must rely heavily on outside economic assistance to maintain the living standards of the North Vietnamese people at minimum acceptable standards. One-half of the North's foodgrain requirements are imported via rail from China and by ship from the USSR and Eastern Europe, and consumer goods as well as all other types of vital economic necessities come to a significant extent from outside North Vietnam. Although there has been some degree of economic recovery since the cessation of the US bombing, the economy in general remains fragmented and inefficient. Under the impact of the new level of U.S. attacks, economic conditions could seriously and quickly deteriorate if Hanoi's land and sea communications with the outside world are interdicted and remain so to an appreciable extent. Meanwhile, manpower shortages persist, with a substantial proportion of all able-bodied males long since sent to the armed forces.

Hanoi's Estimate of Internal Political Conditions. Morale in the North since the bombing halt has apparently declined -- the people expected an improvement in their living conditions, but none resulted, and there is an adverse reaction on this score. At the same time, the regime is emphasizing rigid socialist standards, which entails removing some of the vestiges of private enterprise still remaining in the North. Popular resentments are likely to rise as this program is carried out. The manpower shortages have exacerbated the situation, and there is resentment at the continued draft. While overt opposition is not present, passive resistance on the part of some population elements probably does exist. The regime is capable of maintaining control now, but over a period of time under changed circumstances may find the problem much greater.

Bearing in mind the foregoing considerations, Hanoi will probably take the following specific actions:

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1. Hanoi will almost certainly break off the Paris talks. It may do so by completely removing its delegation and that of the NLF/PRG, or it might decide to leave some low-level representatives behind as a means of maintaining some contact -- after all, Hanoi does want to end the war, and realizes that it will have to talk to us to do so.

2. Hanoi will appeal to world opinion in general to condemn us, and may open a diplomatic and propaganda campaign through friendly countries and in the U.S. itself to isolate us and cause us to give up our military pressure and simply get out of Vietnam.

3. Hanoi may attempt to induce the USSR and the Eastern European countries to make a special diplomatic effort to make us back away, including introducing resolutions to condemn us in the UN Security Council, and possibly also threats of direct intervention.

4. In its diplomatic stance toward us, Hanoi will probably want to appear to be hard and uncompromising, in order not to suggest weakness or to convey the impression that our attacks had struck home hard enough to cause it to offer concessions. However, Hanoi may well utilize its assets in South Vietnam to attempt to draw the fangs of our operations and make us back off. One possibility open to it is to initiate a call for a stand-still cease-fire via the "Provisional Revolutionary Government" which would leave all forces in place. The PRG could also call for some form of territorial accommodation in which it would call for de facto control over large areas of South Vietnam on the basis of the "revolutionary councils" which the Communists claim to have set-up in many places on the basis of "free elections". Hanoi could anticipate a wide measure of popular support in the U.S. for a cease-fire call, with very little critical attention paid to the circumstances under which it was to be effected. The net effect could be a sufficient buildup of political pressure on us to halt all military activities under conditions which Hanoi would hope to exploit better than we could. A cease-fire call could also cause friction between ourselves and the GVN, in view of the latter's opposition to any form of cease-fire.

*2 This was N/HA's proposal*

5. Militarily:

a. In the South, under the assumption that the "understandings" of 1968 were rendered invalid by our operation, we can anticipate more blatant attacks on urban areas, particularly Saigon, Hue, and Danang. In

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addition, there may well be more pressure across the DMZ. Throughout SVN, once the word had been passed and preparations made, there will probably be another "high point" of some consequence intended to inflict as many U.S. casualties as possible to support the activities of anti-war elements in the U.S. It is conceivable that Hanoi may attempt to launch air operations across the DMZ into the South to show that if we escalate, it can too. Finally, Hanoi may resume large-scale infiltration.

b. In the North. In the DRV itself there will almost surely be an effort to step up the draft and mobilize the masses for a much longer war, but Hanoi's latitude in this respect might be curtailed due to manpower limitations and the war-weariness of the people of North Vietnam. (In fact, a return to the status quo ante November 1, 1968, might have a serious negative effect on the people, who have been anxious to see the war end completely, not continue indefinitely.) One new course which is open to Hanoi is to call for "volunteers", as it has occasionally threatened to do, possibly up to and including Soviet pilots and/or aircraft, or manpower drafts along the lines of the Chinese troop contribution. Hanoi will call on Communist China to furnish deep-water ports in South China to replace the quarantined ports, and to permit the continued use of Chinese airfields to Yunnan and Kwangsi as havens for DRV combat aircraft. It may appeal to Moscow and Peking to cooperate to the extent of permitting a Soviet airlift across China and to facilitate the shipment of supplies by rail across China.

c. Elsewhere. Hanoi may counter by stepping up the war in Laos in an attempt to bring about the rapid erosion or collapse of the Souvanna Government, hence diverting our military resources from North Vietnam to meet the wider threat. The North Vietnamese appear to be introducing a new, full division into Northern Laos, which when added to the estimated 13-20,000 DRV forces already there may be capable of retaking the Plaine des Jarres, Muong Soi, and going on to threaten seriously Luang Prabang and Vientiane. The Souvanna Government may not be able to continue if such an attack materializes. Hanoi could anticipate a fair share of public outcry in the U.S. on the score of U.S. overextension if we should respond to meet such a new set of circumstances in Laos, while a collapse of the Souvanna Government and its replacement by a Communist regime would cause great alarm in Thailand and complicate our relations with the Thai.



In Cambodia, it is conceivable that Hanoi may attempt to drive Sihanouk entirely over to the DRV side, and gain fuller access to Cambodian territory for sanctuary and for staging operations than is now the case.

B. U.S. Counter-Reaction

All these moves by Hanoi should be bearable, leaving out the factor of U.S. public opinion.

In Paris, we will simply sit tight, and tell the world that we are willing to resume the talks anytime Hanoi wants to join us. If there are DRV representatives remaining in Paris, we should attempt to see them. We should not, however, attempt to maintain contact with the PRG/NLF representatives unless the GVN is also present.

With respect to Hanoi's appeals for help, we can assume that neither the USSR nor the Eastern European countries want direct involvement. Mere expressions of political and economic support will cause no real pain. The very nature of our actions should make the provision of economic assistance more difficult. In the UN, we will attempt to avoid a vote by mobilizing sufficient votes in the Security Council to kill a condemnation, and attempting similarly to head off a "uniting for peace" effort. We will continue our own publicity campaign to justify our actions, and hope that the brief period of our operations will ease the pressures on us. Actually, the more active the USSR and the Eastern European countries are, the better, since we want them involved and can assume that all, including USSR, will want the war to end before they themselves become drawn in any deeper.

A PRG call for a cease-fire could be troublesome to deal with if simply put in terms of a stand-down cease-fire throughout the South without reference to other, accompanying considerations such as mutual troop withdrawals. U.S. opinion may see such a cease-fire as a way out, and demand acceptance. Our response should be to agree in principle to such a cease-fire provided the proper details were worked out in advance to permit it to be effectively maintained, and provided the principle of mutual withdrawals of all foreign troops from South Vietnam were accepted and such withdrawals actually implemented during a cease-fire. We could insist that the details had to be worked out between the PRG and the GVN, thus creating a reason for the two sides to get together for direct talks which



the Communists might find difficult to resist. It should be noted that a cease-fire appeal would cause problems for the Communists as well, since the degree of territorial control which they would be able to claim on physical terms is far less than they would desire. In addition, their forces are already plagued by a lack of willingness to fight on the basis of "the war is nearly over and why take risks" philosophy, and a rapid deterioration of Communist military assets could occur following a cease-fire appeal. Indeed, the fact that the cease-fire issue has not yet been raised by the Communists suggests that they do not presently see it as favoring their interests. In these terms, a call by Hanoi or the PRG for a cease-fire could be taken as a sign of weakness. Accordingly, we should not give in to public opinion, but should insist on achieving at the minimum a response on mutual withdrawal and supervision before acceding to a cease-fire. well?

None of Hanoi's military actions in the South should cause us any insuperable difficulty, given the state of the enemy capabilities. Attacks across the DMZ would probably be roughly about the current scale unless Hanoi wanted to change its operations entirely and invite a major conflict; however, larger-scale operations bring greater vulnerabilities and invite higher casualties. Air attacks could be warded off, and the state of training of the DRV air force may not in any event be such as to make such attacks effective. The main problem would be the resumption of larger-scale infiltration, but this, as noted, would mean a complete reassessment of strategy, tactics, and goals -- a difficult process in Hanoi without Ho Chi Minh. In addition, heavy infiltration would dip deeply into North Vietnam's manpower pool, which could be troublesome in Hanoi, and require a considerable increase in logistical support, which may not be feasible. Our most important military response would thus be to delay scheduled troop withdrawals, to take advantage of any increased enemy vulnerabilities, and to suggest that we would be willing to fight it out on any scale.

Regarding Hanoi's moves in the North, we should remain calm and anticipate that much of what Hanoi may say it will do is window-dressing intended more for a war of nerves than for real military effect. If draft calls go up there will be political and economic strains on Hanoi. Calling for "volunteers" would have the disadvantages from Hanoi's standpoint of tending to internationalize the war and take it out from under direct Hanoi control -- the larger the outside contribution, the more say the contributors would possess. This is supposing that the most likely

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By THM NARA, Date 11/14/05



contributors, the USSR, the Eastern European countries, and Communist China, would want to be directly involved in the first place. An "international brigade" would be more of a show than a militarily-useful contribution. We might suggest, however, that countries from which "volunteers" were sent would be liable to political and economic counter-measures, if not military reprisals. Chinese manpower, if returned, will help, however, in easing Hanoi's own manpower strains.

The shift of Hanoi's seaborne traffic to South China ports will ease the pressures on it over time, but will require some months to be effective and still leave vulnerabilities, particularly in connection with follow-up attacks on road and rail connections to China inside North Vietnam.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, our follow-on military planning will need to take the new contingencies into consideration. We should begin now to strengthen the Lao armed forces, and in fact are doing so. Extra increments of aid may be necessary, and U.S. military operations on the ground in Laos should be at least contemplated. There is a chance that Hanoi may overextend itself if it tries to accomplish too much in Laos. Regarding Cambodia, we should warn Sihanouk of the possible consequences to his neutrality which direct involvement would entail, and suggest the possibility of Cambodia becoming a battleground if Hanoi's actions there should require a U.S. military response.

The main problem for us will not be the specifics of what Hanoi does but will simply be whether or not Hanoi's leaders will move toward a compromise within an acceptable time-frame. Their various actions to respond to our operation will not count so much as their determination to last us out. It may well conclude that they can get away with calling on their people to tighten their belts and to make do with what they have for as long as they possibly can.

If, as already noted, Hanoi's leaders decide that the undesirable features of resisting a compromise outweigh the undesirable features of holding firm, some signs may be set to us. These could include a beginning of North Vietnamese troop withdrawals from the South, a willingness on the part of the PRG to deal directly with the GVN, and a slackening of the level of hostilities in the South. When we pick them up, we should avoid to the extent feasible a public declamation on the subject, because of Hanoi's need to maintain its prestige. In keeping with Asian military

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tradition, a line of retreat should be left for a defeated enemy on the principle that if he considers himself cornered he is likely to fight to the death in the belief that he has no other recourse. We will thus need to set with great discretion and judgment in handling Hanoi, and should take every opportunity to make it clear through intermediaries that we would be willing to make it as easy as we can for the North Vietnamese to change their previous policies.

If Hanoi should decide to move toward a compromise solution, we doubt that it will allow itself to be deterred by opposition on Communist China's part. Peking has publicly made its objections to a negotiated settlement known on numerous occasions, yet Hanoi has moved ahead; presumably Hanoi would do so again even under circumstances in which the outcome of the negotiations would appear far less satisfactory from Peking's standpoint than, say, under the present circumstances. As noted above, for Hanoi to follow the alternative course of calling for direct Soviet and/or Chinese intervention raises the problem of loss of control over its power of decision, and as far as Communist China is concerned, possible domination of North Vietnam by a traditional enemy of Vietnamese nationalism. Moreover, Hanoi is probably well aware of the Chinese position against engaging in a direct confrontation with the U.S. (see below under Assessment of Chinese Communist Courses of Action).

A list of the political desiderata which we want to achieve from Hanoi through our military operations follows.

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POLITICAL OBJECTIVES TO BE GAINED FROM  
MILITARY OPERATIONS

Basically, what we want to achieve politically is a clear and unmistakable intention on Hanoi's part to accept the principle that the people of South Vietnam should be free to determine their future for themselves without outside interference. This should be signified by the North Vietnamese in tangible ways, as follows:

- By indicating to us directly in Paris (reopening the talks for this purpose if they had earlier broken them off) that they have accepted our principle, and by following up their acceptance with genuine negotiating proposals asking for specifics on our proposals and outlining in a spirit of compromise what changes, if any, they would want in order to protect their interests. They could also indicate a willingness to examine both the President's 8-point proposal and their 10-point proposal to establish areas of agreement.
- By abandoning their stand against dealing with the Thieu Government and opening direct talks between the GVN and the NLF (or PRG) to work out the details of election organization and supervision. T
- By demonstrating acceptance of our call for mutual troop withdrawals. This need not be done formally, but could be accomplished by undertaking substantial troop movements which would unmistakably constitute withdrawals of their forces. MW
- By effecting a "lull" in hostilities in the South, and letting us know directly or through intermediaries that it was definitely intended as a signal of their intention to lower the level of hostilities markedly and permanently.
- By ending their infiltration of men into South Vietnam.
- By removing their forces from Laos and Cambodia.

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Attainment of the first two of the foregoing objectives will probably not be achieved immediately in view of the loss of prestige which the North Vietnamese leaders would suffer if they appeared to be capitulating quickly to our pressure. They may, however, attempt to signify movement in this direction by undertaking some or all of the next steps. In such an event, we should expect firm assurances through intermediaries that these steps were, in fact, intended to show Hanoi's acceptance of our basic principle and that negotiations, including direct talks between the GVN and the NLF/PRG, would shortly resume. We should not accept one of the moves alone, e.g. effecting a "lull", as constituting sufficient proof of Hanoi's good intentions.

Additionally, Hanoi may attempt to appear responsive by:

- Expressing a willingness to restore and abide by the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and the 1962 Geneva Accords on Laos. *will? full status?*
- Calling for a cease-fire. *No*

These moves must also be accompanied by more tangible steps to be acceptable. Restoration of the Geneva Agreements and the Geneva Accords cannot be accomplished without the removal of foreign troops from Cambodia and Laos, and a call for a cease-fire cannot be agreed to without at the minimum Hanoi's responding affirmatively and demonstrably to our call for mutual troop withdrawals. We will also want agreement on international supervision of a cease-fire at an early stage.

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SOVIET REACTIONS AND U.S. COURSES OF ACTION

Summary

The Soviets have always found the possibility that we might interdict access to Haiphong and conduct sustained operations against adjacent shore facilities a disturbing prospect, simply because these actions would directly challenge their prestige and threaten their assets. To the extent that they have ever counseled moderation in Hanoi, their principal specific reason for doing so has been a fear of this type U.S. action. They have also been disturbed, though less so, by the possibility of a concentrated U.S. attack on DRV air-order-of-battle, confronting them with the burdens of rapid replacement; and by the possibility of a U.S. land invasion, which would place in question the very survival of a communist state.

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Soviet reactions to U.S. operations against Haiphong are hard to predict because Soviet options in the area are unattractive. At one extreme there could be drastic responses up to and including direct U.S.-Soviet military confrontation both in the area as well as outside, such as in Berlin. At the other there could be almost total avoidance of confrontation combined with continued overland supply operations and airlifts of questionable effectiveness. The most likely reaction would be between these extremes: efforts to circumvent a quarantine via other ports and by lightering, possibly with Soviet flags, some attempt at mine sweeping, attempts to inhibit our operation by leaving ships in Haiphong, stepped up overland and air supply operations and direct involvement in air defense. Much of this we could not prevent. We would have to make decisions to attack Haiphong even if it meant damage to Soviet vessels and we should be prepared to attack lighters even if they had Soviet flags.

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The Soviets would probably attempt to replace rapidly any losses we could inflict on DRV air-order-of-battle, but they would encounter formidable practical problems in doing so if we had succeeded in destroying a large number of aircraft and in keeping DRV airfields inoperable or under harassment. We would be able to do relatively little to prevent gradual Soviet reinforcement of DRV ground defense.

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Moscow's main purpose following the onset of our operations would be to generate maximum domestic and foreign pressure to get us to cease and desist. To this end, apart from the type of practical measures suggested above, the Soviets would mount a major political campaign, including the disruption of most ongoing political negotiations. They would do this even at some cost to themselves. We would have to accept this; indeed our own readiness to make certain sacrifices in our relations with the USSR might enhance the weight of our measures in Vietnam. Domestic and international pressures running counter to the U.S. offensive military operations against NVN could be offset through governmental initiatives or tacitly ignored. The U.S. government's demonstration of indifference to such pressures might well constitute the strongest signal of all.

The chances that the Soviets would also exert real pressure to induce greater moderation on the part of the DRV are not great, especially if Moscow was convinced that the DRV leaders are prepared to persist on their present course. If, however, Moscow thought there was some ambivalence in Hanoi, it might engage in a mixture of pressures and inducements to tip the balance. The Soviets would argue that the DRV could in the long run achieve its goals in the south by diplomacy and political means.



POSSIBLE SOVIET REACTIONS  
and  
US COURSES OF ACTION

1. In Area

<u>Soviet</u>	<u>US</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Leave ships in Haiphong Harbor.	Avoid deliberate damage but attack area consistent with requirement for effectiveness.	
Anchor vessels offshore and offload to lighters without or with Soviet flags.	Avoid damage to ships; attack lighters.	
Send ships to alternate ports.	Mine approaches.	Contingency plan required for Chinese ports.
Assist DPV in sweeping with Soviet personnel.	Reseed; if necessary attack sweepers.	
Send in Soviet sweepers	Reseed;	
Send in Soviet sweepers with escorts	Reseed;	
Attacks on US vessels with subs; surface vessels, DRV vessels with Soviet "volunteers". (All unlikely)	Return fire;	
Air attacks with Soviet pilots on US vessels. (Unlikely)	Return fire, hot pursuit.	
Replace DRV aircraft by rail or air-lift.	Attack airfields; armed recce to harass fields.	
Soviet "volunteers" in air defense system.	Attack as planned.	
Increased supply shipments by land and air.	Attack ground facilities as planned; keep airfields inoperable.	

2. Out of AreaSovietUSRemarks

Harrass access to Berlin

Use existing contingency plans

Requires allied participation

Prevent US access to Berlin

Blockade Soviet military mission  
to US forces in Germany;  
Block Soviet use of Panama Canal;  
Act against Soviet trawlers;  
Quarantine Cuba;

Requires planning  
Requires planning  
Requires planning; OAs

Block all access to Berlin

Use Existing Contingency Plans  
as aboveRequires allied  
agreement

Harrassment of US shipping

Respond in kind; escort.

Harrass US 6th Fleet in Med.

Respond in kind; place force near  
approach to Turkish Straits

Break air agreement

Acquiesce

Attack US recce flights near Soviet  
borders.

Reduce flights, escort rest.

Increase military readiness; alert

Appropriate DEFCONs

Requires careful examination to avoid miscalculation and pre-emption.

3. Political (illustrative)

Interrupt ongoing negotiations

Acquiesce

Act in UNGA

Respond in kind; if unavoidable accept  
adverse vote.

Act in UN Security Council.

Do likewise; if necessary, use veto.

Use Hot Line to exert pressure

Keep cool.



Discussion

1. Interdiction of access to Haiphong, the bombing of adjacent shore facilities, and any other measures threatening sea communications with the DRV probably have always been the single most disturbing development for the Soviets to contemplate in connection with the Vietnamese war. Also troublesome to them, but less acutely so, has been the threat of a major US campaign against DRV air capabilities or US land operations against the DRV homeland.

2. Attacks on the approaches to and the shore facilities in Haiphong engage Soviet interests in several related ways. They pose a direct physical threat to Soviet ships and in that sense represent a direct challenge of the USSR in a situation where its available and direct military responses are scarce and where we have the capacity to put the burden of escalation on them. At the same time, the other major choice open to the USSR, while less risky vis-a-vis the US, is politically and psychologically unpalatable -- that is, to withdraw their shipping from Haiphong in order to avoid the risk of damage or loss and to honor the quarantine.

3. Because US action against Haiphong would pose such serious problems for the USSR, we must allow for the possibility of drastic Soviet responses. On balance, such responses seem less likely than a more measured combination of military and political actions (see below), but our planning must prepare for the contingency of Soviet military actions against US shipping, naval and merchant, in Vietnamese waters either by submarines already in the area or readily within reach, or by DRV aircraft with Soviet pilots. We must likewise be prepared for retaliation and counter pressure in areas where the local advantage rests with the USSR, most notably around Berlin, possibly in the Sea of Japan, or at least by proxy in Korea. For these and other possible points of pressure, contingency plans already exist. The most pessimistic view of this kind of Soviet reaction would be that it could lead cumulatively to a major US-Soviet confrontation, up to and including the risk of general war.

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4. At the other extreme of the drastic response would be a Soviet decision to avoid damage to their shipping and to minimize the possibility of direct physical confrontation with the US. This would not

necessarily be accompanied, at least in a way discernable to us, by constructive and helpful political moves; on the contrary it might be masked by an extremely hostile political and propaganda posture. Under this contingency, the Soviets would promptly move their ships out of Haiphong and would abide by whatever quarantine or restrictions we had imposed on access to this and other ports. They would not attempt to run the minefields. The Cuban missile crisis provides a reasonable analogy for this type of Soviet response.

5. At the same time, even such a response might and probably would not be without problems for us. Whatever they do at sea, the Soviets would probably do what they could to speed and increase overland shipments through China (assuming the Chinese are permissive) and to attempt increased supply by air, including via China, via India-Burma-Laos (which they have attempted in the past) and perhaps directly from the Soviet Far East. Their Egyptian airlift in 1967 has given them some practice in this. Overland and air supply could not handle bulk items such as POL, cement, etc. and their airlift would be subject to the availability of landing fields in North Vietnam. It is possible that the Chinese would make available airfields for Soviet aircraft, though this has not been successfully worked out between the Soviets and the Chinese in the past and would in any case require further arrangements for onward overland transportation.

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6. Between a ragged or drastically escalatory response and total avoidance of a maritime confrontation lie a range of possible Soviet actions. Apart from attempts at an airlift and increased overland shipments, the Soviets might seek alternate means of sea access. Depending on the precise location of minefields, the Soviets might anchor ships further to sea and resort to lighters. They could place Soviet flags on these to deter attack. In addition, or alternatively, the Soviets could sail their ships to other ports although in the case of those in China this will require Chinese agreement (not a foregone conclusion) and cooperation for transshipment (even less a foregone conclusion).

7. Nor is it certain that the Soviets would remove all their shipping in Haiphong harbor. Even if it were possible for them to do so physically -- which, depending on how much warning they had



might be infeasible -- they might instead elect to keep one or more vessels in port even at the risk of loss or damage. Their calculation would be that this might deter or at least inhibit, and hence reduce the effectiveness of US air attacks on port facilities. Even if we were not deferred or inhibited, the Soviets might believe that they could subsequently turn injury to their property to political and psychological advantage against us. At the same time, should Soviet ships be sunk or damaged, it might be more difficult for the Soviets to refrain from tangible counteraction since their prestige will have been engaged. Thus, even if the Soviets had initially decided to do no more than leave a ship or two in port, they might subsequently, if this had failed to deter us, feel obliged to undertake more concrete actions against us.

8. We must squarely face the question of whether or not to risk damage to Soviet vessels in Haiphong. Reconnaissance might reveal whether we could avoid bombing in close proximity to such vessels and still accomplish our main objective of destroying the shore facilities, but we probably should make a decision that if effectiveness so requires, we will bomb even at the risk of damaging Soviet vessels.

9. The Soviets will almost certainly consider the feasibility and desirability of attempting to sweep the minefields. To do this with any degree of effectiveness requires substantial numbers of minesweepers which would take several weeks to get to the Gulf of Tonkin. Even if this were accomplished, the operation would be unattractive since we could reseed without engaging Soviet vessels. Moreover, these vessels cannot stay at sea indefinitely and by definition of our mine plan it would be difficult if not impossible for them to put into DRV ports, or to get out again without substantial losses. Thus, even if the Soviets should attempt such operations they should not seriously affect the quarantine. This being the case, we probably need take no special steps to prevent Soviet vessels from getting to the scene or to attack them once there.

10. To the extent that our attacks on DRV air order of battle are effective the Soviets will be under pressure to send in replacements. They acquired some experience in rapidly airlifting crated fighter aircraft to Egypt in 1967 with AN-12 transports. In the Vietnamese case they will, however, have to cope with more difficult conditions; longer distance, less certain overflight arrangements, more difficult weather conditions, uncertain condition of airfields in Vietnam following US strikes, possible conduct of operations --

landing, assembly, flight-testing -- at Vietnamese airfields under actual attack or threat or US armed reconnaissance. All of these factors, and other problems, would make a major Soviet effort to replace large numbers of fighter aircraft a formidable though not impossible undertaking. Our actions can affect the degree of difficulty in three ways: (1) the number of DRV aircraft we destroy in our strikes will determine the rough number of necessary Soviet replacements; (2) the damage inflicted to DRV airfields will determine the difficulty of subsequent Soviet operations; and (3) policy we follow in conducting armed recce against DRV airfields and other air defense targets will affect the efficiency of the replacement operation.

11. Although the pressures operating on the Soviets to undertake a replacement operation will be strong -- e.g., prestige, influence in the DRV and the Communist world, deterrence of the US -- the actual Soviet decision as whether to proceed will be strongly influenced by their judgment of its feasibility (which, as noted above, we can influence) and by a determination as to whether they want to utilize DRV dependence on them as leverage in getting the DRV to assume a more conciliatory posture toward the US. On balance, assuming reasonable feasibility, we must expect the Soviets to go through with the operation, rather than withholding it for purposes of political pressure. On the other hand, if we succeed in raising really substantial physical obstacles to a meaningful replacement operation, we have some chance of influencing the political behavior of the DRV (and the USSR) in a positive direction for we would then confront the DRV with the prospect of facing our next onslaught with a greatly degraded air-defense.

This plainly argues for:

- a. destroying the largest number of DRV aircraft possible;
- b. doing the greatest possible damage to DRV airfields; and
- c. attempting to keep those airfields inoperable, or at least hampering their return to operability, to the maximum extent possible.



12. Apart from the question of Soviet replacement of DRV air order of battle, Moscow will consider assisting the DRV air defense by increasing its passive capabilities. SAMs and AAA, and associated radar, can be shipped in overland, though this will take time and depends on Chinese cooperation. The Soviets could again airlift personnel to operate the system. There is little or nothing that we could do by military action to prevent such assistance, though we might hamper it by attacks on the rail system. If we succeeded in destroying the DRV air order of battle, in preventing its replacement, it seems questionable whether the Soviets could do enough to augment the air defense system to prevent us from launching subsequent air attacks against targets of our choosing.

13. In any event, our own decision-making must face the probability that in suppressing DRV air defense we are likely to encounter Soviet personnel and to spill Soviet blood. Here, as in other aspects of this whole operation, we need to make a clear decision that we will take this risk.

#### Political and Associated Actions

14. The crucial judgment that must be made is whether the Soviets, whatever they may or may not do to assist the DRV in overcoming or mitigating the physical effects of our actions, will somehow exert effective pressure on the DRV to change its course in directions we seek. This is a tough judgment for the Soviets and we cannot make predictions with much assurance.

15. One important factor in the Soviet decision will obviously be their assessment of our determination and ability to carry through the course on which we will have embarked. They will want to test this by first exerting maximum pressure on us by punishing us for our actions, and by deterring us from continuing operations.

16. For this reason, we should expect a major Soviet political pressure campaign. Even if we succeed in initially disconcerting the Soviets by the surprise and vigor of our action, their automatic reflexes in this sort of situation are well developed and it will not take them long to set in motion their propaganda, psychological and political machinery.

17. They will wish to give maximum support to the arguments and emotions of the domestic opposition in the US as well as to our opponents, critics and detractors and to the skeptics abroad. Their best instrument for doing so will be to raise the spectre of US-Soviet confrontation and the ghost of a return to the cold war. For this reason, apart from the screams of the propaganda media and possible action in the UNGA, which will still be in session, we can look for Soviet withdrawal from ongoing negotiations and bilateral arrangements with us, even if by so doing they have to make certain sacrifices of their own.

18. Whatever may or may not be the real Soviet attitude toward and expectation of SALT, we should expect them to block those talks and other ongoing arms control discussions, if only because we did so last August when they invaded Czechoslovakia. This is no place to go into the complex Soviet motivation in this whole field, except to say that SALT may not occupy nearly as crucial a role in Soviet thinking as in ours and therefore its sacrifice or postponement will not cause them excessive pain. Since we ourselves have established the principle of interconnections, we should recognize that SALT in the presence of major US military action in Vietnam with potential for direct US-Soviet confrontation would be incongruous. Our willingness to forego it may indeed serve to impress the Soviets with our determination.

19. Similarly, we can expect the Soviets to withdraw from the Middle East negotiations, although, since the Soviets themselves have tended to use these to dampen down the prospects of a Fourth Round, this may not be an easy step for them. In this situation, Israeli military strength is an asset for us since it will tend to deter Soviet efforts to open up a second front against us with their Arab proxies. Prospects for rapid progress in the Middle East negotiations are at best meager and our own interest in the kind of "settlement" likely to emerge from them is in any case equivocal; there is no need to let Soviet withdrawal from the talks and even a more belicose Soviet posture inhibit what we do in Vietnam.

20. As regards Berlin, we should also expect Soviet withdrawal from current sparring over the resumption of the long-interrupted negotiations. This is no loss for us, though it might tend to stimulate adverse German and UK reactions to our Vietnam operations. More



serious of course is the possibility of a Soviet-GDR counter-blockade of Berlin. We have never had nor do we now have any assured way of preventing the Soviets from such action. Ultimately, our deterrent has always rested on our ability to convince the Soviets that we will not let West Berlin starve or fall even if it means escalation to nuclear war. Our drastic action in Vietnam may help us to maintain the presumption that we would act "irrationally" in defense of Berlin. Still, Berlin is Moscow's most advantageous pressure point against us and in the postulated situation the Soviets may calculate that our allies will be so ambivalent in their support of us that a Berlin crisis would in fact exert genuine pressure on us to desist in Vietnam. We must steel ourselves to this possibility, maintaining a readiness to undertake prompt responses to any Soviet/GDR encroachments.

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21. We should expect the near-total disruption of our bilateral relations with the Soviets, from air agreement to cultural exchange. While some in the US will consider this too high a price to pay and the Soviets will play on such sentiment, this probably will be the least of our problems. Our own responses to such Soviet disruptions should be crisp and direct so as not to give the Soviets the slightest reason to assume that their actions will divert us from our course.

22. The Soviets undoubtedly will also push the East Europeans to sever contacts with us. They may call a Warsaw Pact meeting to proclaim their anathema of us and even the Romanians might in these circumstances find it necessary to toe the line. It will be argued that we are handing the Soviets a potent instrument for reasserting discipline in the Bloc; there is some merit to the point but in our scale of priorities at the time it can hardly weigh heavily in our mind. Moreover, Moscow's historical problem in Eastern Europe will not disappear even if solidarity is temporarily restored.

23. In sum, the Soviets will turn on the heat in the immediate aftermath of our actions even at some pain and sacrifice to themselves. And we will almost certainly confront substantial setbacks to objectives we have sought in our dealings with the USSR. Moreover, we must expect the Soviets to succeed in generating or reinforcing major political opposition, domestic and foreign, to us. However, unless our domestic problem gets out of hand (which it will do only marginally through Soviet doing), the real damage that Moscow can do to our political interests will almost certainly not match or exceed the benefits that would accrue from success in our Vietnam operation (which should be defined as favorable DRV action as a result of the

effectiveness of our military operations). The problem is that the adverse results of Soviet action against us are likely to appear much sooner than the successful results of our Vietnam operation. This means that we must always maintain the conviction that in view of the benefits we expect from achieving our goal in Vietnam we can and must tolerate the worst the Soviets can do to us.

24. Our ability to maintain and credibly convey this conviction will be crucial if we are to have any hope that the Soviets will exert leverage on the DRV. To do so will not be easy because our political system and our body politic simply may not let us. But even if we succeeded, the chances that the Soviets will exert genuine and effective pressure on Hanoi or otherwise play a role useful to us cannot be rated as better than even.

25. The greatest leverage they have is in their material supplies, and this gets down to the basic question of how Hanoi will react if faced -- either because of the effectiveness of our interdiction operations or because of deliberate Soviet cessation of such shipments as could still get through, or because of both -- with a drastic reduction or an end of Soviet material support. Hanoi's own decision is likely to be to carry on as best it can alone or with Chinese support (which could make up for some though not all the types and quantities of material now coming from Russia). If this is also the Soviet judgment, Moscow may simply not be prepared to pay the political price -- in Hanoi, in international communism and in great power prestige -- of being seen to welch on an ally and play the "American game." The argument in the Kremlin on this may be hot and heavy but it is hard to see how those who would "betray an ally" could in the end win out. If this conclusion is correct, the Soviets are likely to pursue the type of middle-range actions in physical support of the DRV discussed earlier, i.e., as much replenishment as feasible while avoiding gross risks of direct military engagement with us.

26. If on the other hand, the Soviets concluded that Hanoi was prepared to move, or that there was enough political sentiment in the DRV's political leadership to move, Moscow might through some mixture or pressure and inducement seek to tip the balance. The pressure would be in the form of footdragging in replenishment (the physical obstacles being what they are, there will be plenty of alibis for slowdowns and shortfalls); the inducement would be in the form of

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some role as a political intermediary. The attractiveness of this course, if Hanoi were willing or half-willing, lies in the fact that the Communists after all need make only relatively small concessions to ensure diplomatic movement in Paris and can fairly easily regulate the intensity of the fighting in the South.

27. We are not seeking victory but compromise; compromise, moreover, on terms which many in Hanoi might see as ultimately leading to their achievement of their goals in the South, anyway. Certainly the Soviets could argue, as they may have at times in the past, that American objectives have become so modest over time and the objective trend is in any case running so heavily toward US disengagement, that Hanoi can afford to pursue its goals by political means. In a nutshell, while we almost certainly cannot expect Moscow to pressure or argue Hanoi into surrender, there are circumstances in which Moscow could see its way clear to try to persuade Hanoi that it can achieve what it wants by patience, diplomacy and political action. Only history -- our own conduct and the course of events in the South -- will tell whether the Soviets had given Hanoi sound advice and an accurate prognosis.

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ASSESSMENT OF CHINESE COMMUNIST ACTIONS  
AND U.S. COUNTER-COURSES

Summary.

Peking's overriding objective will be to keep North Vietnam from giving in, and to this end it will provide material assistance of a military and economic nature, and possibly use political pressures on Hanoi to keep it in the war. However, unless Communist China concludes that North Vietnam's survival is being threatened, her instincts probably will be to continue her past policy of staying in the background and acting as Hanoi's "reliable rear". From the standpoint both of ideology and national security she probably will want to avoid a direct confrontation with the U.S., particularly in view of the problems along the Sino-Soviet border and her troubled internal circumstances. Politically and diplomatically she will try to help Hanoi to focus world attention on the changed circumstances in Vietnam, and will carry out a campaign of vilification against the U.S. Since nothing short of a serious Soviet confrontation with the U.S. as a result of our quarantine would satisfy Peking, we believe that there will not be a warm-up in Sino-Soviet relations, but rather an intensification of Peking's anti-Soviet stance if, as the odds would favor, the USSR's reactions fall short of a full-scale confrontation. Militarily, Peking will offer increased material assistance to Hanoi, and possibly a return of the engineer and anti-aircraft units which have been withdrawn, surfacing them as "volunteers" if Hanoi so desires. She might also attempt to step up the actions of Peking-influenced guerrillas in other parts of Southeast Asia in hopes of drawing off U.S. strength, and will continue to provide Hanoi with the use of Chinese airfields in Yunnan and Kwangsi as a haven for DRV aircraft. She will open ports in South China to shipping, including Soviet shipping, diverted from North Vietnam, and offer Chinese trucks and freight cars to carry supplies into North Vietnam from Chinese ports.

Our reaction will be essentially the same as it has been in the past with respect to Peking's role in the Vietnam war. We will pass the word to Peking that our actions are not directed against China. We will watch China closely, however, and undertake contingency planning to counter stepped-up Chinese pressures off Taiwan and in areas of Southeast Asia other than Vietnam.

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We do not anticipate that Peking will attempt to deter Hanoi from moving toward a genuine compromise settlement of the war should Hanoi decide to do so. Despite the undesirable aspects of such a settlement from Peking's standpoint, Peking's rationale for avoiding a direct conflict with the U.S. will probably prevail.

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POSSIBLE CHINESE COMMUNIST ACTIONS  
AND  
US RESPONSES

<u>CHINA</u>	<u>US</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
1. <u>In Area</u> Step up flow of military and economic aid	Hit at NVN LOC's between NVN and China	
Return military contingents of engineer, service and AAA troops of types formerly in NVN	Continue planned operations without regard for nature of opposition	Strength of Chinese units would probably not go much above previous level of 45- 55,000 men
Offer pilots as "volunteers" to fly aircraft with DRV markings	Same as above	
Offer Chinese airfields in Yunnan and Kwangsi as sanctuaries for DRV aircraft	Break off hot pursuit of aircraft flying into China short of frontier	Chinese will probably not authorize direct attacks on US aircraft or ships from Chinese airfields (this was the case during previous bombing)
2. <u>Elsewhere</u> Offer South Chinese ports to shipping diverted from NVN, provide Chinese trucks and freight cars	Periodically, hit LOC's in NVN between NVN and China	
Cooperate with Soviets in setting up airlift into NVN across China	Periodically hit NVN airfields	



<u>CHINA</u>	<u>US</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
Step up activities of Chinese-influenced guerrillas elsewhere in SEA	Activate contingency plans, increase military aid where needed	Burma is a vulnerable area; contingency planning may be needed
3. <u>Political</u> (representative) Surface Chinese "volunteers" in NVN, thus threatening Korea-type war	Keep cool, continue planned sequence of operations, point out past history of Chinese involvement	Chinese unlikely to vary pattern of involvement significantly from that already established

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Discussion.

Communist China's overriding objective will be to keep Hanoi from succumbing to our operations, and to this end it will offer material assistance of both a military and an economic nature, and exhortation (perhaps combined with a degree of political pressure) for Hanoi to keep going on the basis of a protracted "peoples war". At the same time, short of a level of action which Peking would take as a U.S. intention to destroy North Vietnam as a viable Communist state, Communist China's every instinct will probably be to stay out of direct military involvement. On ideological grounds it believes that "people's war" must be won by the people themselves with only material assistance provided by the "proletarian internationalists"; hence the overt introduction of Chinese forces would tend to vitiate this "revolutionary" principle. In addition, the Chinese are thoroughly conscious of the strategic imbalance between their forces and those of the U.S. and would seek to avoid a direct confrontation. Peking's problems in facing the U.S. are compounded by its internal dislocations and by its border dispute with the USSR. Peking's rationale in avoiding a confrontation in favor of acting as Hanoi's strong rear area has guided it from 1965 on, and would probably continue in effect even under circumstances in which the Vietnam war went into dimensions never reached before. In this respect Peking might take the line that our attacks represented an act of desperation, and indicated that victory was in sight for Hanoi if it could hold out long enough.

We can probably anticipate as well that there will be no warm-up in Sino-Soviet relations. The only level of Soviet response which would satisfy Peking would be a full acceptance of the U.S. challenge with all its implications; anything less would be regarded as "collusion" with the U.S. by in effect acquiescing in the changed circumstances of the war. As was the case when the U.S. carried the war to the North in 1965 and Moscow failed to respond, the new situation would then bring with it a heightening of the Sino-Soviet polemic. This would not preclude limited arrangements between Peking and Moscow in assuring the flow of aid to Hanoi, however.

Specific Chinese Communist responses are as follows:

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1. Peking will certainly attempt to exploit the situation and politically to undercut Soviet influence in Hanoi, using the "I told you so" approach, and charging also that Hanoi's predicament was brought about by U.S. and Soviet "collusion". Peking will urge "protracted war" until a military victory is achieved, and to this end may offer increased material assistance. A step-up in China's world-wide campaign against U.S. "imperialism" and Soviet "social-imperialism" can also be expected, possibly to include diplomatic efforts on Peking's part to induce Afro-Asian states in which it has some influence to condemn the U.S. and the USSR. Concurrently, Peking would "freeze" any U.S. approaches to improve relations.

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China stalled;  
at odds  
with  
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2. The Chinese probably will reintroduce their engineer, service, and AAA units into North Vietnam on the same terms as before, i. e., quietly and without calling them "volunteers". In view of Hanoi's manpower problems and heightened need to keep land communications open, the Chinese forces could serve a highly useful purpose. In sending troops into North Vietnam, China will also be serving an internal political purpose of showing its people that it is living up <sup>to</sup> the promise first made at the time of the Tonkin Gulf crisis that it would not stand idly by in the event of a U.S. attack on North Vietnam.

At the peak of Chinese participation, Peking's forces consisted of three anti-aircraft divisions, about 12,000 men, engineer construction and railroad engineer units numbering 22,000-30,000 men, and miscellaneous service forces of 6,000-8,000 men, for an aggregate of 40,000-50,000 troops. These were positioned mainly along the highway and rail links running northeast and northwest from Hanoi to the Chinese border, and are believed to have assumed the primary role in keeping these links open. It may take some time to reposition the Chinese forces, however, since the units involved have been dispersed and assigned to other tasks. Some are in Northern Laos.

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If Hanoi and Peking decide jointly to surface the Chinese forces, a new dimension will be added to the war by involving Peking directly and threatening a wider, Korean-type war. Although such a move would have some psychological value, it would not change the actual circumstances too much. U.S. and world opinion have long known of the Chinese role in Vietnam. And Peking would still be Hanoi's "reliable rear", since the forces involved would in all probability not be committed to combat but would serve in the same supporting capacity as before.

3. China will in addition open its South China ports of Canton and Fort Bayard to shipping diverted from North Vietnamese ports. Whatever additional military aid which China might provide and which North Vietnam might use would be offered by Peking, including diversion of Chinese trucks and freight cars from domestic needs to help maintain the flow of supplies into North Vietnam. The Chinese would also continue to provide use of Chinese airfields in Yunnan and Kwangsi for non-operational activities. Conceivably, the Chinese might offer MTBs or "Komar-Osa"-class PTGs to the North Vietnamese, as well as MIG-19s. This would probably be the limit of Chinese help under the circumstances envisaged given China's own internal difficulties, both political and economic, its need to keep increased forces along the Sino-Soviet border, and its realistic-cum-ideological stand that "people's war" must be won by the concerned people themselves with only material assistance to be proffered by the "socialist" countries.
4. As evidently occurred in 1965, Peking might try to intensify the activities of Peking-influenced guerrillas in Northern Thailand, Laos, and Burma in an effort to divert us from Vietnam. Peking's assets in Thailand among the non-Thai Meo have been sufficient to hold off Thai forces from mountainous areas of Northern Thailand, and it is developing ties with anti-Government ethnic groups in Burma. There could be a step-up of Chinese roadbuilding in Laos. Such

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moves would be intended to show that the war "had no boundaries", and possibly divert U.S. resources from Vietnam. A move to increase tensions in the Taiwan Strait is possible for the same reason, but not too likely in view of the risk of direct confrontation with the U.S.

U.S. Counter-Responses

On the political and diplomatic front, Peking's efforts should not create undue difficulties. Peking's isolation from much of the world and its troubled internal situation leave it without much leverage, and the shrillness of its vituperation over the years can hardly be stepped-up further. We should, however, approach Peking's representative at an appropriate spot to convey the message that our attacks are not directed against China.

Militarily, our main requirement will be to avoid provoking China but to maintain U.S. reconnaissance and intelligence activities directed toward the China mainland to detect troop movements and other indications of hostile intent. It will be important to avoid creating the impression that we ourselves are considering carrying the war to China. (As noted above, we will have passed the word via diplomatic contacts to Peking that we were not directing our attacks toward the Chinese.) Elsewhere, we will want to step up our surveillance of areas such as Laos, Northern Thailand and Burma to detect possible Chinese Communist efforts to create diversionary pressures. A heightened alert posture throughout East Asia will be ordered. ?  
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If Sino-Soviet tensions should in fact increase through Chinese criticism of the Soviet role, China's military resources could be in part diverted away from Vietnam in favor of the Sino-Soviet border areas.

As a final consideration on Communist China, we doubt that Peking would interpose itself directly between Hanoi and a genuine compromise settlement when -- and if -- Hanoi should decide to accept one. Peking's rationale against direct involvement has already been described, and should remain in effect even under the changed circumstances after our operations. The alternative for Peking would be to assume the role of a

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principle protagonist in a war in which the balance of military power would not be on Peking's side, quite apart from the doctrinal embarrassment China would suffer through contradicting its own basic principle. The Chinese are fully capable of twisting their call for a military victory into acceptance of, and support for, the kind of protracted political struggle which would emerge in South Vietnam.

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INTEGRATED DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY SCENARIO

Time	Action	Agency
D-30	Establish for the record in a low-key way the history of Hanoi's intransigence in Paris and violation of the "understandings;" this will be accomplished by appropriate statements and backgrounders.	State, White House
D-30	Alert military commanders in the field that operations will be carried out as planned; order them to begin necessary preparations.	Defense
D-6-1/2 to D-2	Most distant CVA departs port for Tonkin Gulf (timed to appear as normal movement).	Defense
D-3	Issue alert order to Commander SEVENTH Fleet to prepare to execute mining plans and to Commander SEVENTH Air Force to prepare to execute air strikes.	Defense
D-2	Issue execute order to Commander SEVENTH Fleet and Commander SEVENTH Air Force.	Defense
H-9	All surface forces in launch position for mining operation in Tonkin Gulf. All air forces at ready status for air strikes.	Defense
H-4	Final go - no go.	White House

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Time	Action	Agency
H-2	Increase readiness posture for SAC and SIOP forces world-wide.	Defense
H-1	Launch air strikes against NVN targets from bases in Thailand and SVN.	Defense
H-1	Launch mine operation aircraft from carriers to Tonkin Gulf.	Defense
H-1	Inform GVN.	State: Embassy Saigon
H-1	Inform TCC's (including GVN).	State: Meeting of Ambassadors in Washington with Secretary
H-1	Inform UK Prime Minister	State: Ambassador in London
H-1	Inform Japanese Ambassador in Washington and Prime Minister in Tokyo.	State: DepAsst Secretary for East Asian Affairs; Ambassador in Tokyo
H-1	Inform NATO allies.	State: Meeting of Ambassadors in Washington with Hillenbrand
H-1	Inform OAS.	State: OAS Rep
H-1	Inform Laotians.	State: Asst Secretary for East Asian Affairs



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Time	Action	Agency
H-1	Inform Ambassadors of countries with ships in or en route to Haiphong, Hòn Gai, Cam Pha.	State: Country Directors
H-1	Inform USSR.	White House to Dobrynin
H-1	Inform Cambodia.	White House to Cambodian Charge' and American Charge' to Sihanouk
H-1	Inform Congressional Leadership (call meeting at <u>H-2</u> ).	White House
H-1	Alert TV networks.	White House
H-1	Press backgrounder (locked door until "H").	White House
H-1/2	Inform USSR.	White House: Molink Message
H	Naval aircraft mine all NVN deep-water ports; aircraft strikes at selected NVN targets.	Defense
H	COMUSMACV increases readiness posture.	Defense
H	Speech by President.	White House
H	UN -- Request UNSC meeting.	State: USUN

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Time	Action	Agency
H	Summon special meeting of Paris talks.	State: Embassy Paris/ US Delegation
H+2	UNSC meeting.	State: USUN
H+5	OAS meeting.	State: OAS Representative
H+5	Inform other governments.	State: Diplomatic Posts
H+12	SEATO meeting.	State: Embassy Bangkok
D-Day	Commence intensified world-wide diplomatic and informational campaign to gain understanding of our actions.	State, White House
D-Day	Be prepared to contend with NVN escalatory actions in SVN and Laos.	Defense
D+1	Initiate follow-up air strikes .	Defense
D+2	Lay destructor weapons.	Defense
D+3	Minefields activated. Continue combat operations as directed.	Defense



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IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

The following list of important questions is based upon our examination of the Vietnam alternative course of action to date. While the list is certainly not complete, we should have a very good idea of the answers to these questions before adoption of such an action. The questions are presented in the general order in which they would occur if we proceeded with the course.

a. General.

1. What are the prospects of success for this course of action? How would we measure it? What are the consequences -- favorable and unfavorable -- of our succeeding in this manner? Of our failing in this manner?

2. How hard hitting should we make the first phase? Should the second and subsequent phases be tailored for roughly equal impact, or should they be stepped up in over-all impact? To what limit of force should we be prepared to go in order to spur meaningful negotiations? Should we be prepared to use nuclear weapons?

3. Should we make any major readjustments in our current military posture?

b. In the Period Before the First Phase.

1. What should be the nature, channel, and timing of warnings to Hanoi? How would Hanoi, Moscow, and others react to warnings? Would warnings affect military operations through loss of surprise? Should we undertake warning actions, such as increasing certain reconnaissance flights or early readying of forces?

2. What should be our diplomatic stance during this period? Should we offer more -- perhaps only to build the record further -- or would this be a sign of weakness or duplicity?

3. What signals or actions by the other side would persuade us not to proceed?

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4. How would we relate the decision to proceed and the many political and diplomatic actions with the vagaries of the weather?

5. To what extent should we consult with our allies?  
When should we do it?

c. During the First Phase.

1. How should we determine how long the phase should last? Will we be able to measure the attack effectiveness as we proceed? If not, how will this affect the operation?

2. What would be the likelihood and consequences of military failure? What can be done to compensate for unexpected eventualities, such as a long period of bad weather? Can we achieve a minimum desired effectiveness by alternative means?

3. What actions by Hanoi would be sufficient to merit our halting the attack before it is completed?

4. What military actions should we undertake concurrently, e.g., should we alert our strategic and/or the various theater forces? What reinforcing actions would be appropriate in SVN, recognizing that there would be a substantial reduction of tactical air support available in country?

5. How would we handle the likely immediate reactions of the USSR, Communist China, and other foreign countries? What preparations should be made?

6. How would we deal with the likely domestic reaction? What preparations should be made? (These questions fall outside our competence.)

d. Interval Between Phases.

1. What specific responses are we looking for? How would we respond to vague signals of willingness to talk seriously? How would we react to enemy actions which seem promising but are unacknowledged by them?

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2. What measures would we be prepared to take against targets within NVN if we found them to be effectively countering our sea quarantine, e. g. , a key railroad bridge between Hanoi and China? Would we permit air or naval response to coastal battery fire against our quarantine forces?
3. What diplomatic stance should we adopt during the interval?
4. If Hanoi responds in a manner acceptable to us, should we offer to assist in removing the mines? Alternatively, should we simply not interfere with NVN sweeping and bypassing efforts and allow the mines to remain active for their present time?
5. How long should we wait before initiating a second phase of attacks? (Most of the questions concerning Phase I would apply to this and subsequent phases.)